

“A Prima Donna Who Talks,” *The Washington Post* (Washington, DC), 8 Dec. 1881, 4

The Famous People Miss Blanche Roosevelt Has Met—Her Operatic Career

“Be careful how you get me started on the subject of myself,” said Miss Blanche Roosevelt to a POST reporter, yesterday. He had asked her to tell him something of her musical career. The question was repeated.

✂ *Several paragraphs that are unrelated to Wilde.*

“My first introduction in the literary society of London was at the house of Tom Taylor. Our party consisted of Mrs. Tom Taylor, my mother, William Black, Wilkie Collins, Robert Browning and Charles Reade. I don’t remember anything funny being said at the table; they were all ‘English, you know,’ and devoted themselves to eating;¹ but after there were enough witticisms flying around to relieve the editor of *Punch* from any further duties for a year. During my last visit I met Lady Wilde and her ‘too, too, too’ Oscar.² He was attired in a bottle-green redingote with a pair of light gray unmentionables, tender, aesthetic gaiters in yellow cloth with patent-leather toes, a wide, open collar and an amiable necktie. *A la* Madame de Staël, he carried in his hand a spray of delicate ferns.³ His hair is long and light, his eyes blue and complexion extremely blond; his jaws are very massive and remind one of—well, Oscar Wilde. His whole personality is so peculiar that he is utterly unlike any one in the world excepting his own utterly-utter self.

✂ *Several paragraphs that are unrelated to Wilde.*

1. Perhaps a reference to Wilkie Collins’s novella *The Dead Alive* (1874), in chapter one of which a character says, “We are English, you know; and, though we do live in the United States, we stick fast to our English ways and habits.” Variations on the phrase “It’s English, you know” were used in the press to mock either English who affected superiority or Americans who imitated English manners; they later served as refrains in humorous songs, such as ‘The English Swell’ (1885) by Lewis Dockstader and John A. Armstrong, and “Quite English” (1885) by W. S. Douglass and A. S. Ramsay.

2. The name is given as “Wylde” in the original.

3. Germaine de Staël (1766–1817) was a Genevan and French woman of letters and political theorist. Roosevelt presumably refers to Marie Eléonore Godefroid’s portrait, which depicts Madame de Staël holding a sprig of leaves.